

MINUTES

SPECIAL MEETING

**McDowell Sonoran Preserve Commission
Community Development Conference Room
1st Floor, One Civic Center, 7447 E. Indian School Road
October 20, 2003
5:00 p.m.**

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m.

ATTENDANCE

Present: Art DeCabooter
Les Conklin
Dennis Carr
Laura Fisher
Virginia Korte
Erik Filsinger
Christine Kovach
Howard Myers
Don Ruff
Solange Whitehead

Absent: Arnold Roy

Staff: Bob Cafarella
Claire Miller
Don Meserve

Visitors: Bob Vairo, Charley Freericks, Carla, Lesley Wright, Joe Kullman, Inge Vairo,
Marie Baier

ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

Commissioner Kovach announced City Council appointed Art DeCabooter to the Commission.

Commissioner Ruff NOMINATED Art DeCabooter AS CHAIRMAN OF THE MCDOWELL SONORAN PRESERVE COMMISSION. MOTION WAS SECONDED BY Commissioner Fisher, WHICH CARRIED unanimously 10 to 0.

Chairman DeCabooter stated he was happy to be back on the Commission.

REPORT FROM AD HOC FUNDING COMMITTEE

Chairman DeCabooter stated the Commission charged the Ad Hoc Funding Committee to continue to look at what options are available. He further stated they worked very diligently with the Trust for Public Land that was contracted by the City of Scottsdale as a conservation

consultant, and they conducted a survey of the citizens of Scottsdale and assisted the Ad Hoc Funding Committee in formulating their recommendation.

Mr. Cafarella stated the Ad Hoc Funding Committee was charged with going back and doing additional analysis and the Ad Hoc Funding Committee debated how to approach their task and decided to have some dialogue with the Trust for Public Land. The City Manager entered into a contract with the Trust for Public Land for them to assist on this issue of how to fund the additional land acquisition for the Preserve. He noted Marie Baier will report on what some of the analysis indicates, noting that their information was very helpful to the Ad Hoc Funding Committee.

Carla stated they are dealing with two trusts, the McDowell Sonoran Land Trust (MSLT) and the Trust for Public Land (TPL). She further stated they felt it was important to bring in the TPL to work with the MSLT because they needed to bring in their national expertise and objectivity.

Ms. Baier, TPL, reported the TPL is a national non-profit land conservation organization that has been around for 31 years with its headquarters in San Francisco, California. She further reported they work with people in local government and local land trusts to try to offer services to help them make decisions on what funding mechanisms to use. She remarked they are delighted to be working with Scottsdale to assist in your efforts.

Ms. Baier passed out the results of the recently completed opinion poll of 400 registered Scottsdale voters to assess the level of support for a proposed city ballot measure to increase sales taxes to fund the acquisition of additional land for the McDowell Sonoran Preserve. Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin & Associates conducted the poll. Ms. Baier introduced David Metz, (joining them by telephone conference) who took the lead with Fairbank, Maullin & Associates on conducting this poll.

Mr. Metz provided a brief overview of the survey results. He stated the results show that a majority of voters support a ballot measure to increase sales taxes by four-tenths of one percent to fund the expansion and protection of the McDowell Sonoran Preserve. Voters are most enthusiastic about dedicating revenue from the measure to preserve desert lands and wildlife habitat, protect water supplies and water quality, and prevent additional development around the Preserve.

Mr. Metz reported that 58 percent of respondents indicated that they would vote “yes” on the measure and 20 percent, said that they would vote “no” with the remaining voters undecided.

Mr. Metz stated those who opposed the measure or were undecided were asked, in a follow-up question, whether they would support it if it increased sales taxes by only three-tenths of one percent. The results showed that a smaller sales tax increase would result in only a slightly higher level of support (a few percentage points).

Mr. Metz stated the results also suggest that as voters get more information about the potential ballot measure and the projects it would fund, their inclination to support it increases. Accordingly, they consider it important for supporters to undertake a well-funded and comprehensive public education campaign that informs voters about what the proposed measure would do. When provided with such information, the poll results suggest that Scottsdale voters will be highly inclined to support additional funding for the Preserve.

Commissioner Kovach inquired about the likelihood of the 13% that is undecided voting no. Mr. Metz stated that typically most voters who are undecided break to the no side. The challenge is to make the voters that are initially inclined to vote yes stay that way.

Chairman DeCabooter reported it is recommended that City Council schedule the local election for May 18, 2004, and that will give supporters two addition months to do a comprehensive public education campaign.

Commissioner Kovach asked Mr. Metz, in his experience in past situations like this, what are some of the hot buttons. Mr. Metz reported water, growth and preserving the desert.

Commissioner Kovach inquired if Mr. Metz learned anything from this poll that surprised him. Mr. Metz stated one of the things that was noteworthy about the poll was that a large proportion of citizens were familiar with the Preserve.

Commissioner Korte inquired if there was any measurable difference between the level of support between the north and south geographic areas. Mr. Metz replied there was bit more support in the north than in the south but overall the voters in every region were more inclined to support.

Mr. Cafarella inquired if there were any discernible trends in peoples' opinion regarding access, whether the City is providing access adequately and in a timely fashion. Mr. Metz replied that did not come up for a reason to not support the measure.

Commissioner Kovach inquired what kinds of local and international events could cause a lot of yes votes to switch to no between now and the vote. What have you seen in other communities? Mr. Metz replied that is hard to predict but some dramatic economic bad news. Ms. Baier reported there were several elections nationally in November right after September 11th and 80 percent of these measures passed.

Mr. Vairo inquired if Mr. Metz had reviewed the poll that the Ad Hoc Funding Committee had taken some months ago. Mr. Metz replied in the affirmative. Mr. Vairo inquired if there were any changes in terms of acceptance of support between the surveys. Mr. Metz stated they were very similar.

Chairman DeCabooter reported the Ad Hoc Funding Committee of the McDowell Sonoran Preserve Commission unanimously approved the following recommendation at a meeting October 16, 2003:

“For the purpose of acquiring land for and improving the McDowell Sonoran Preserve in order to maintain scenic views, preserve plants and wildlife and support tourism, while providing appropriate public access and passive outdoor recreational opportunities for residents and visitors, shall the City Council be authorized to increase the rate of transaction privilege and use taxes in the city by four-tenths of one percent for a period of 30 years and to approve bonds for these purposes, subject to an independent annual audit and citizen review.”

The Ad Hoc Funding Committee further recommends that the proposition question be submitted to voters in May 2004.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY Commissioner Kovach to approve the Ad Hoc Funding Committee's recommendation as stated above. MOTION WAS SECONDED BY Commissioner Korte, WHICH CARRIED unanimously 10 to 0.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 5:50 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

For the Record Court Reporters

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